1: Holmberg--II [2] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 372

"Fire making is a lost art among the Siriono. I was told by my older informants that fire (táta) used to be made by twirling a stick between the hands, but not once did I see it generated in this fashion. Fire is carried from camp to camp in a brand consisting of a spadix of a palm. This spongelike wood holds fire for long periods of time. When the band is traveling, at least one woman from every extended family carries fire along. I have even seen women swimming rivers with a firebrand, holding it above the water in one hand while paddling with the other.

In the hut every family has its own fire on the ground by the side of the hammock. Dried leaves of motacú palm are used to bring a fire to a blaze. Any dried or rotten wood serves as firewood (ndéa). The logs are placed on the ground like the spokes of a wheel, the fire being made in the part corresponding to the hub. As the ends of the logs burn down they are pushed inward. Cooking pots are placed directly on the logs. No hearths are used."

"While I was living at Tibaera, my attention was called one afternoon to the arrival of seven Indians (two men, two women, and three children) who appeared to be especially thin and emaciated. After giving them some food, I inquired as to the reason for their semistarved condition. One of the men told me that they had run away from the Government School at Casarabe, situated about a hundred miles east through an uninhabited forest and plain that contained no trails, and that they had been without food for 'many' days. This struck me as strange, inasmuch as the men were carrying their bows and arrows and the lands through which they had come were known to contain considerable game, including wild cattle which occasionally stray from the herds that wander on the plains of Mojos. Their hunger, it turned out, resulted not from the lack of game but from a lack of fire. After leaving the school, they marched at a rapid [31] pace for a day or two to escape pursuit, after which they became so fatigued that while they were sleeping heavily one night their fires became extinguished. Since the Siriono have lost the art of making fire, and will not eat raw game under any conditions, this party was left with the alternative either of returning to the school and being severely punished for running away or of striking out in the direction of settlements which they knew to exist on the Rio Blanco and being rewarded by obtaining fire and freedom. While making the journey to Tibaera, they were reduced to a diet of a few plants and wild fruits which they found along the way, and because of the young children they were considerably impeded in their progress. Thus the journey, which would normally take about 6 to 8 days to

complete on a full diet, lengthened to a period of 18 or 20 days because of the meager diet on which they were forced to exist. One of the men told me that if they had not arrived when they did they might well have starved to death."